**Technology Report**

The 21st Century has brought many changes to our society. These conditions are not static, either. New technologies continue to emerge transforming the way people live and how businesses are operated. Education is not isolated from this change. While our educational system may be evolving at a much slower pace than the rest of society, it is still evolving nonetheless. In fact, there is urgency for our schools to teach our children 21st century skills using technology. Will Richardson states in his article, The Seven C’s of Learning (2007), “To continue to approach schooling from a content delivery model puts us at risk of quickly becoming irrelevant. (p. 97) Acknowledging this, we must continue to move forward in preparing our students to be successful in a rapidly changing society by integrating technology within our technology.

Along with the multitude of advantages that come from using technology in the classroom, there are also drawbacks. One of the valid concerns that is raised when discussing the incorporation of technology in learning is the safety of our students. Undoubtedly, when we allow our students to engage in the use of blogs, wikis, social networks, and other Web 2.0 tools there is a level of risk that they face. Child predators and cyberbullies are two major threats that must be considered and addressed.

“A recent study showed that one in five youths (between ages 10 and 17) ‘received a sexual solicitation or approach [over the Internet] in the past year,’ and ‘one in seventeen [youths] were threatened or harassed’ online.” (Finkelhor, Mitchell, & Wolak, 2000, p. ix)

This statistic highlighted in Adelman’s *Teaching Online Safety* article proves that we need not look far for evidence that would make us leery of our students using the Internet. The dangers are real. Online predators are lurking. They watch their victims and interact with them at a seemingly surface level while they build trust. The fact that most students feel an unrealistic sense of invisibility while on the Internet only helps out a predator. Unfortunately, many students do not realize what is happening until it is too late.

Cyberbullying is another hot topic issue when it comes to the safety of our students. Like the statistic showed above, many children are facing the torture and threats of a cyberbully. Because of the Internet, these bullies can remain nameless, faceless, and removed from the response they are inciting from their victim. Also, due to the accessibility of the internet 24 hours a day, seven days a week a cyberbully is able to taunt their prey anytime and without regard to location. According to Hitchcock:

“This includes instant messaging (IM), chatting, social networking sites such as MySpace, emailing, using message boards or groups, creating a Web site about the victim, text messaging via cell phones, or videotaping a beating on their cell phones and posting it on MySpace or video Web sites such as YouTube.”

Gone are the days when bullying only happened on the school playground. The Internet has made it possible for bullies to take their agenda to a whole new level.

The internet and the plethora of Web 2.0 tools available to educators have opened up a world of possibilities for engaging kids in real-world learning. Along with the advantages also come risks. Cyberbullying and online predators are two safety issues that teachers must be well informed about. If we are not, we are endangering our students. One of our responsibilities is to be aware of these issues, to educate our students about them, and empower them to use the web safely and wisely. When we act from a proactive stance, rather than a reactive one we are setting up a vital safety net for our students.

References

Adelman, Hallee (2004). *Teaching Online Safety.*

Hitchcock, J.A. (2007). *Cyberbullies, Online Predators, and What to Do About Them.*

Richardson, Will (2007). *The Seven C’s of Learning.*